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SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR AF/EX, OBO, DS

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [ABLD](#) [ASEC](#) [ASIG](#) [AMGT](#) [CV](#)

SUBJECT: PRAIA NEEDS ANNEX PER OIG RECOMMENDATIONS ON SECURITY

REF: A. 09 STATE 70715

[B](#). 07 PRAIA 329

[C](#). 07 PRAIA 276

[D](#). 07 PRAIA 298

[1](#). (U) Summary and Action request. Embassy Praia has exceeded the available workspace in the USG's 36-year old Chancery. Post requests OBO and DS assistance in identifying a solution, now that our place on the NEC list for replacement our downtown street-front property has been pushed back from 2013 to 2020. There is some considerable urgency, as post needs to come into compliance with the OIG recommendations requiring the movement of LE staff. This message outlines six options, none of which is perfect, but all would meet the requirements imposed by the OIG in Post's recent inspection. In keeping with the OIG's deadline and imminent expansion of our staff, we request preliminary feedback by March 1 so we can begin work on the selected solution. End summary and action request.

Current Situation

[2](#). Post's current five-story Chancery located in downtown Praia houses State employees only, and small offices accommodating multiple employees have been created in every usable space, including the roof. This arrangement has caused several problems including:

- A physically divided Front Office operating two floors apart;
- LE staff working both above and below the CAA;
- No line of sight and no cashier booth in consular section;
- Higher expenses for multiple security outposts and utility charges;
- Lack of a common area for more than five people;
- Difficulty coordinating with other Mission agencies;
- Little usable space for TDY visitors and regional support;
- Restricted ability to meet with contacts at the Embassy;
- Lack of cohesion among Embassy staff because of the physical arrangement;
- No ability to install an elevator or any other measure to being the building into compliance with Americans with Disabilities' Act (ADA) requirements.

Urgency

13. Post would ideally benefit from immediate construction of a new Chancery building; given our place in the NEC queue, however, we request OBO and DS assistance in selecting an appropriate alternative in the interim that will bring us into compliance with the OIG's security requirements. That requires us to relocate the five FSNs from the roof above the CAA and the two FSNs from the floor below the CAA to other location(s). Also, over the last couple of years, Cape Verde's bilateral cooperation on counter-narcotics, security, democracy, regional stability, development, and trade issues has increased our need for staff significantly. To support the necessary programs and reporting required at this time, we have needed to add five new LE positions and we will be receiving five new USDH positions over the next 18 months. Without these positions, we cannot carry out the essential programs outlined in our Mission Strategic Plan. However, our original Chancery building does not have the space to accommodate our necessary growth and these much-needed new employees will, in just a few weeks, have no place to work. Assuming that we cannot relocate to a NEC until 2020 or later, we are seeking alternative work areas that will add at least fifteen new office spaces and room for two common areas for training, meetings, and conferences. RSO Dakar has seen most of these options on a recent regional support visit and is able to comment on the security aspects of these options. We urgently ask for approval to move forward with option A

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below -- adding 4 non-warehouse LE staff members to the space in that facility. However, we include the pros and cons pertaining to all other options in the interest of an informed decision by the Department. We are not aware of any other options besides these.

Considering Six Options

14. (A) Our strongly preferred option is to move all GSO operations out to our new short-term lease (STL) warehouse. In addition to the existing employees who were based at our previous warehouse under a Department-issued waiver, we propose adding four non-warehouse employees to the warehouse offices: our local hire GSO, motorpool supervisor, GSO clerk, and procurement specialist. We therefore need a co-location waiver. This would be the most expedient and cost-effective solution since we have usable office space for all GSO employees and the space is wired for Opennet. The move could happen within a week of approval and would free enough space in the Chancery to make necessary moves to meet the OIG's immediate CAA requirements. Post understands from consultations that security requirements generally make co-location waivers for warehouses cost-prohibitive; however, given our limited options, this is clearly the most viable solution to our immediate problem. Ref A confirms OBO's approval for the lease and acknowledges that it is approved for use of warehouse staff only; however there is the space to house other management section employees and the warehouse is already one of our local guard force posts. Post requests feedback on this preferred option.

(B) A second option that Post strongly supports is to purchase or lease and rehabilitate the former USAID building adjacent to

the Chancery. This facility is owned by the city and was returned to the city when the USAID mission closed in the mid-1990s. At that time, DS recommended against the purchase because of concerns about adding onto a property without setback. Subsequently, when the Millennium Challenge Corporation, MCC came to post in 2005, it only needed three additional work areas and the per capita cost sharing would have exceeded \$120,000 for a five-year presence. In 2005, MCC told Post that it was not cost-effective to purchase a property and refurbish for such a small number of new positions and a short-term presence; however MCC has recently selected Cape Verde as the first country to become eligible for a second, five-year MCC compact; therefore we will continue to have the agency present until 2015. At the same time, State has grown significantly and now requires additional space for State's program and ICASS employees, as outlined above. This option would create space for an additional 20 new desks.

-- Post estimated in 2005 that the refurbishment would cost around \$193,000 for the installation of security lighting, upgrading exterior walls, construction of a new roof, replacing grilling on windows, reinforcing the skylight with tempered glass, and updating the electrical, HVAC, flooring, and plumbing. While Post recognizes the preference to avoid refurbishment projects if there are other, less technically-demanding solutions, this option does allow for several benefits that the others do not. We would ensure that the property adjacent to our Chancery remains in good condition, make use of a common generator, house as much of the Mission as possible, use a common Post one and security force, and take advantage of the most affordable real estate in downtown Praia. Also, these refurbishment costs would be offset by the savings from sharing the security, utilities, and technology services from the existing building. Post has contacted Praia's city council to confirm availability, request floor plans, and a 2010 lease price.

(C) A third option is renting commercial space in the annex that houses MCC, on the floor above the Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC) office for a net gain of about five offices in 1,614 sq feet. The apartment is an attractive possibility, since it is only two blocks away from the Chancery, in the same building as MCC, would benefit from the same local guard post, and could qualify for a co-location waiver despite its lack of setback. However, the apartment has several limitations. First, the space configuration is different from the set up that was approved for MCC -- all of the offices in the new space face a

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busy downtown street whereas MCC is in the back of the building, off the street. Another limitation is that the space can only fit a few offices, so whichever employees we move would have their supervisory Americans several blocks away. Post therefore believes the rental is too small to resolve our limitations or facilitate Embassy operations..

(D) A fourth possibility is to consider leasing a large commercial space where we could house the entire mission jointly. There is significant construction underway around Praia and it may be possible to locate something to house the mission over the next decade. Initial information gathering indicates that most new commercial properties lack the setback and blast wall standards required for a co-location waiver, however Post would welcome assistance from OBO real estate specialists to help us with this search. Our last search for a location in 2007 was to find property for a new NEC and any location that would be acceptable for a waiver could be considered. Assistance from an experienced OBO advisor would help us quickly hone in on whether this is a viable option and whether we could include the necessary security measures in the

leased property.

(E) The Embassy owns a 5,000 square meter property in the residential area Achada Santo Antonio, near the STL COM Residence. The property is in a good area and is close to other diplomatic missions and Embassy housing. The property can be configured to allow for setback and is much safer than the current Chancery location. In April 2007, this property was considered for future Residence construction, however our records indicate that OBO did not believe the site was viable for either EMR or a NEC construction given the size of the land space. Post would support eventual construction at the site, but believes that any construction would have to be paired with a more immediate solution so we can continue operations with the additional personnel.

(F) Finally, we understand that space planners can come out to assist with reallocation of the workspace to maximize our current facilities. We would welcome space planner's assistance, especially since we have exceeded the usable space and for some time local staff member have been in offices that should be reserved for cleared Americans. If space planners can help us re-locate the five LE staff and establish work areas for other employees, this would be a welcome short-term solution. However Post notes that space planning alone is unlikely to resolve our ongoing problems in this area, given the small size of existing offices and the fact that several offices already house more than one employee. There are no other common areas that can be converted since we are in the process of converting the only conference space into an office for our new management officer.

Finding a Solution

15. Post requests OBO and DS feedback on these options, particularly about the possibility of support in securing a co-location waiver for use of office space at the warehouse and/or support to reopening discussions with the city of Praia to purchase the former USAID building. Given the long lead time necessary for new purchases and construction, Post also requests assistance from a real estate expert so we can assess the opportunities in the local market. We do not have the personnel to be able to do an exhaustive search while continuing to provide facilities maintenance services, so we would welcome the assistance. We hope to select and implement an option as soon as possible so that we will have the offices ready in time for our new staff to begin work. Praia's POC for Washington offices is DCM/MGT Officer Ms. Dana Brown, who can be reached at 238 260-8909 or BrownDML@state.gov. Post appreciates the Department's assistance.

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